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From: Salemi, Charles (DPH)
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2008 4:32 PM
To: Nassif, Julianne (DPH)
Cc: O'Brien, Elisabeth (DPH); Hanchett, James (DPH)
Subject: FW: Evidence Office at full capacity

Hi Julie, Betsy sent me this email today. I know I sent you an email last week about the backlog, but the situation in the evidence office is past the breaking point. Two weeks ago, we had samples put into the done bins that hadn't been analyzed. Luckily, they were found before they went back to the police untested. Today, the office spent several hours looking for a case for which an expedited request came in for. After several hours, the case was found in the Food and Drug's tampering case bin. It's hard enough to deal with the backlog and the constant barrage of expedited requests coming in, but we can not deal with mistakes being made because the Evidence Room has no place to put samples. I would like Betsy, Myself, and Jim Hanchett, to meet with you and Dr Gilchrist, and anyone else, before your FSAB meeting, to formulate a plan to deal with this worsening situation. Several suggestions have been made over the past couple of months, (years), about what can possibly be done, but so far, none of them have been implemented. It is imperative that we meet and discuss how serious this situation is. Thanks

Chuck S.
Drug Analysis Laboratory Supervisor

From: O'Brien, Elisabeth (DPH)
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2008 2:49 PM
To: Salemi, Charles (DPH)
Cc: Sprague, Shirley (DPH); Ridley, Stephen (DPH)
Subject: Evidence Office at full capacity

Chuck,

The evidence office has reached the point of complete capacity with regard to storage. We have attempted to clear out the bulk marijuana in attempt to maintain control over "loose" packages in an effort not to misplace them. Even with this endeavor the amount of space that was recently created is not enough to solve our storage issues. We are forced to store boxes full of drug cases on the floor and pile more boxes on top of them. Maintaining organization is difficult under these conditions and my fear is that a drug case will be misplaced or lost. The area that distinguishes the samples being returned to police and the samples that are to be analyzed has been compromised as we address these storage issues. The evidence office staff spends a great deal of time searching for expedited cases and must move large and heavy boxes full of samples to find cases that need to be pulled for analysis.

Given the serious nature of the samples that we handle in that they are controlled substances and are used in criminal prosecutions I am uneasy with the current storage situation. I would think in this day and age given the recent publicity and scrutiny certain police departments have undergone with their evidence handling and storage that we would be able to have the space or the funds necessary to deal with this situation before a crisis occurs.

I bring this to your attention now because the near future looks bleak as the courts resume their activity after the summer and the drug lab faces personnel issues such as retirement. The only way to immediately help solve this problem is to either find more space, institute overtime to reduce the numbers of samples waiting to be analyzed, or reduce the number of samples being submitted.

Thanks,
Betsy